



ORAL FITNESS FACT SHEET

Good Nutrition ↔ Oral Health ↔ Mission Readiness

Soldiers who have oral health problems often have pain or difficulty chewing. Soldiers with chewing difficulties are less likely to eat balanced diets. This can result in poor nutrition and negatively affect mission readiness.

Poor nutrition can cause a breakdown in your oral health:

- Decreased intake of vitamins and minerals can lead to mouth sores, breakdown of your gums and oral cancer.
- A diet that is high in starch or sugar promotes tooth decay.
- Poor diet affects how well your immune system functions. It affects your ability to resist bacteria that cause gum disease.

Eat foods that provide the vitamins and minerals needed for good oral health.

Vitamin	How it affects your mouth	Found in these foods
Vitamin A (carotene)	Prevents dry mouth and oral cancer	Broccoli, brussell sprouts, green leafy vegetables (spinach, collard greens, kale, etc.)
Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)	Prevents soft, bleeding gums, and loose teeth Prevents oral cancer	Citrus fruits, cantaloupe, strawberries, green leafy vegetables, bell peppers
Vitamin D	Promotes strong teeth and jaw bones	Oily fish, milk, eggs, cereals, sunshine
Vitamin E	Prevents growth of thick white patches in the mouth (leukoplakia). Prevents oral cancer	Vegetable oil, nuts, peanut butter, wheat germ
B2, Niacin, B6, B12 Folic Acid	Prevents soreness, redness and bleeding of the gums, cracking and sores in the corners of the mouth and on the tongue	Salmon, beef, liver, chicken, fish, yogurt, nuts and beans Breakfast cereals, spinach, navy beans, orange juice, pasta, rice
Calcium Phosphorous Magnesium	Needed for tooth development, prevents loss of jaw bone and teeth, rebuilds hard surface of the teeth(enamel)	Milk, cheese, yogurt, seafood, dark green leafy vegetables
Fluoride	Prevents tooth decay, helps repair enamel	Fluoridated water, black tea, sardines
Zinc	Needed for digestion, healing cold and canker sores	Liver, various meats, eggs, seafood, whole-grain cereals
Iodine	Needed for tooth development	Iodized salt, seafood, kelp, saltwater fish
Copper	Absorbs iron. Helps produce blood and nerve fibers	Liver, kidney, seafood, nuts, seeds, tap water
Iron	Protects against oral cancer and helps the immune system	Liver, eggs, fish, seafood, various other meats, enriched breads & cereals, green leafy vegetables
Potassium	Needed for nerve function and muscle contractions	Vegetables, legumes, fruits, milk, cheese, various meats, whole grains

Keep your mouth healthy so you can eat nutritious foods. Choose the right foods to protect or improve your oral health. Look at the fact sheets on Smart Snacking and Healthy Hydration for more information.



Directorate of Health Promotion and Wellness

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhgw/oralfitnessmain.aspx>

